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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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SECURITY INFORMATION

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COUNTRY	Bulgaria	REPORT	
SUBJECT	Bulgarian Internal Affairs: Arrests and Releases of Prisoners	DATE DISTR.	15 October 1953
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<p>THE SOURCE EVALUATIONS IN THIS REPORT ARE DEFINITIVE. THE APPRAISAL OF CONTENT IS TENTATIVE. (FOR KEY SEE REVERSE)</p>			

1. Reports concerning the release of political prisoners from Bulgarian prisons. If these reports had not been counterbalanced by reports of the arrest of other Bulgarians, though fewer in number, one might be led to believe that Bulgaria was trying to initiate a policy of easing tensions, at least in so far as internal public opinion is affected. 50X1-HUM
2. a fairly large number of prisoners have been released in recent months, as follows:
 - a. Approximately 200 persons released in Plovdiv between 15 and 25 August 1953;
 - b. 200 persons released in Sofia on 25 August 1953;
 - c. 300 persons released in Sofia on 27 August 1953; and
 - d. 200 persons released in Sliven during August 1953.
3. the total number of prisoners released amounts to between 1,000 and 2,000 persons. These releases from prison allegedly took place on the sly, in small groups, and after those about to be released had been forced to promise that they would not tell anyone that they had been freed. Obviously this was done in order to avoid that the whole matter become too widely known and that the people should be led to investigate who and how many had benefited from this "magnanimous" gesture. 50X1-HUM
4. The released prisoners allegedly came both from prisons and from concentration and work camps. some of these camps (including Balene) are allegedly to be abolished and eventually closed. 50X1-HUM
5. Apparently the persons released were not chosen among those condemned to more severe sentences. Furthermore, those released, if they were condemned for "political" crimes, were apparently either black marketeers or at most small-time "saboteurs." These people were condemned as an example, perhaps even to capital punishment, but their sentences were not carried out and were later converted to life

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imprisonment and eventually still further reduced. All these were individuals who had, for example, damaged machinery or installations which were their own property.

6. It is believed that these clemency measures have actually taken place in more or less large numbers, for the purpose of artificially creating an atmosphere of reduced tensions among the people, without however giving up in the least the government's position of intransigence. This becomes apparent from various facts, for example the fact that these reports of releases of prisoners are circulating particularly in the large cities, such as Sofia, where foreign diplomatic representatives are stationed. None of the individuals freed is a figure of first or even of second rank. The Feast of the Liberation (9 September) is near at hand and at this time there is to be a series of popular demonstrations animated by "spontaneous" enthusiasm. The very manner in which the prison releases have been carried out, without any publicity and absolutely on the sly, and the rumor of an imminent closing of the Belene camp (a rumor spread and repeated by those released) make it apparent that these very same people have been taken in.
7. At the same time, as if to lessen the optimism and to reduce the tensions which were brought about by the measures reported above, it has been reported that groups of families have allegedly been arrested and sent to prison in accordance with the expatriation law which decrees severe penalties for the relatives of those who escaped clandestinely from Bulgaria, or who failed to return to their mother country within the period allowed by the authorities, and chose to remain abroad.
8. In principle, included among the transgressors are those who, having legally left Bulgaria in the past, have found a position abroad and obviously have no intention of returning to Bulgaria, in spite of the solicitations made by the Bulgarian government authorities. It is not known if the expatriation law applies also to relatives of expatriated citizens who left Bulgaria legally, or whether only those who escaped clandestinely are affected.

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